



Beginnings

(ADAPTED FROM "TWENTY YEARS' HISTORY")

AT the close of the Civil War, four millions of freemen were thrown upon their own resources, and citizenship, for which they were entirely unprepared, was thrust upon them. A "Freedman's Bureau" was established by the United States Government, and during the first ten years after the close of the war it spent three million dollars in providing schools and teachers.

After a time, denominational "Freedmen's Aid Societies" were organized, replacing other forms of service in this field, and the whole responsibility fell upon the churches.

The Freedmen's Aid Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church was or-

ganized in 1866. At the end of its fourth year, ten thousand pupils were enrolled in its schools. Among its teachers were accomplished young women from the North, of whom a distinguished minister of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, said, "Of all who go out under the Master's commission, no one takes up a heavier cross than the woman who, leaving a Northern home, goes into the Southland, there to sit down by her degraded colored sister, to point her to Jesus."

After a time it became apparent that not only were schools of a higher grade needed, but a system must be introduced which should aim more directly at the redemption of the home. While the women of the church in the North were being prepared for this in various ways, faithful ones in the South were unconsciously paving the way by doing the work without organization. Of these, Mrs. Jennie C. Hartzell (wife of the present Bishop for Africa) was the pioneer. Mrs. Hartzell became deeply interested in the colored people while her husband was pastor in New Orleans. In close

association with her were Mrs. R. S. Rust, and others. Each year the calls became more imperative, and at last the Woman's Home Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church was organized, in Trinity Church, Cincinnati, Ohio, July 6, 1880.

Upon Mrs. Rust, as Corresponding Secretary of the new society, developed the duty of creating interest, fostering sentiment and promoting organization. When, eighteen years later, she came to the end of her earthly life, the Society could give voice to no truer sentiment than this, "Always in the lead, always a step ahead of the rank and file."

At the time of the first annual meeting, in October, 1882, the Society had been formally approved by forty-three Annual Conferences. Its first local auxiliary was organized in St. Paul's Church, Delaware, Ohio, July 27, 1880, and its first Conference organization was effected in the Erie Conference, September 25 of the same year.

Its first mission work (in New Orleans, La., Orangeburg, S. C., and Atlanta, Ga.) developed, a little later, into Peck, Simpson and Thayer

Homes. The disbursements of its first year were \$4,400, and a debt of \$910 had been incurred. The deficit was met, with a large increase in receipts, the second year. By the end of its fourth year the Society was recognized by the General Conference as a part of the machinery of the church. Its growth was steady and strong, and included the formation of "Bureaus," the publication of a paper, the development of a Supply Department, the appointment of a General Organizer, the movement for a training-school and the organization of Mothers' Jewels.

This story of "Beginnings" must, as a matter of course, be incomplete. Only eternity can tell results. But enough has been shown, even here, to make the women of Methodism thank God with full hearts for the privilege of being co-workers with Him.

Woman's Home Missionary Society
Methodist Episcopal Church

150 FIFTH AVENUE

NEW YORK CITY

6 cents per hundred, postpaid